DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 208 739 HE 014 427

AUTHOR Patterson, Aldrich H., Jr.; And Others
TITLE Attitudes and Characteristics of Summer School Students.
INSTITUTION Maryland Univ., College Park. Counseling Center.
SPONS AGENCY Maryland Univ., College Park. Office of Summer Programs.
REPORT NO UM-CC-RR-6-80
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 19p.
AVAILABLE FROM University of Maryland, Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Counseling Center, College Park, MD 20742 ($1.50).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Students; Comparative Analysis; Day Programs; Evening Programs; Higher Education; *Participant Satisfaction; State Universities; *Student Attitudes; Student Characteristics; Student Motivation; *Summer Schools
IDENTIFIERS *University of Maryland College Park

ABSTRACT

A random sample of 302 (78 percent return rate) summer school students at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), were surveyed regarding their characteristics and perceptions of summer school. The mean age of the students was 25.8 years; 66 percent were single, 28 percent married, and 5 percent divorced or separated. Only 6 percent of the sample reported that they were living in a residence hall. When students were asked about their employment status, the largest group (37 percent) were employed part-time (27 percent worked during the day and 10 percent at night), another 23 percent indicated that they were employed full-time (18 percent during the day and 5 percent at night), while 7 percent indicated that they were during the regular school year but had the summer off. An additional 34 percent said they were not currently employed. Seventy-eight percent attended UMCP during the regular academic year and 18 percent attended another institution. Fifty-five percent preferred morning classes only, 8 percent preferred afternoon classes only, and 11 percent preferred evening classes only. In rating their summer school experience, students agreed that their academic work was much more intense in summer school than during the regular academic year. Overall, they reported summer courses to be stimulating and exciting, and generally agreed that their goals for summer school had been met. (Author/LB)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED208739

# COUNSELING CENTER

## Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

### UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

College Park, Maryland

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Counseling Center

Univ of MD

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

HE 014 420

# ATTITUDES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SUMMER SCHOOL STUDENTS

Aldrich M. Patterson, Jr., William E. Sedlacek and
Terence J. Tracey

Research Report # 6-80

COUNSELING CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

# ATTITUDES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SUMMER SCHOOL STUDENTS

Aldrich M. Patterson, Jr., William E. Sedlacek and Terence J. Tracey

Research Report # 6-80

## SUMMARY

A random sample of 302 (78% return rate) summer school students were surveyed regarding their characteristics and perceptions of summer school. The mean age of the students was 25.8 years. Sixty-six percent of the sample were single, 28% were married, and 5% were divorced or separated. Only 6% of the sample reported that they were living in a residence hall.

When students were asked about their employment status, the largest group (37%) were employed part-time (27% worked during the day and 10% at night), another 23% indicated that they were employed full time (18% during the day, and 5% at night), while 7% of the students indicated that they were employed during the regular school year but had the summer off, and an additional 34% said they were not currently employed. Seventy-eight percent indicated that they attended UMCP during the regular academic year, while 18% attended another school. Fifty-five percent preferred morning classes only, 8% preferred afternoon classes only, and 11% preferred evening classes only.

In rating their summer school experience, students agreed that their academic work was much more intense in summer school than during the regular academic year. Overall, students reported that their summer courses were stimulating and exciting, and in general, agreed that their goals for summer school had been met.

Implications of these and other findings are discussed.

Very little attention has been paid to the summer sessions at universities and colleges. In educational circles the summer has traditionally been a period of relaxation and/or catching up. Yet the enrollment in summer schools does not reflect this degree of slowing down. At the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), typically 16,000 students enroll each summer in a much curtailed curriculum. During the academic year there are only two and one-half times as many students on campus enrolled in a curriculum that is much larger than this 250% increase would indicate. So the lack of attention directed at summer programs, such as the one at the University of Maryland, seems incongruent with the size of the program.

The paucity of literature regarding summer school also reflects this inattention. From the little research done in this area it appears that summer school students are different from those enrolled during the academic year. While academic year degree students enroll in summer courses, they are often the minority (Hawaii University, 1978; Kanun, 1970). Many summer programs have more students who are summer degree only or special students. Schools (universities, colleges and community colleges) have begun to realize that these new or non-traditional audiences are important, and changes should be made to accommodate them. Some recommendations posited have been to redesign the summer curriculum (Sesow, 1974), and to revamp course lengths, creating shorter, more intensive courses (Williams, 1974). Yet it appears that these recommendations, as well as many others, are rationally based and have no foundation in data. The needs of the summer student populations (both regular and/or special) really are not known (Zillman, 1969). Thus many well meaning attempts at redesigning and revamping may have little value, and are, in essence, blindly done. One study found that the faculty felt that the length of a course was important in attracting students and meeting their needs; but in fact, no differences among course lengths were found (Cuyahoga Community College, 1973). So it appears crucial to study the students attending

summer school and to get a sound data base of their needs so that effective steps can be taken to meet them.

The present study was designed to study these issues. Particular emphasis was placed on identifying who the summer students are, their specific needs, and their evaluation of the summer school experience.

## METHOD

A random sample of 386 undergraduates, graduates and special summer students were selected to participate in the study. The sample was composed of students attending summer sessions I and II at UMCP. In order to have a more representative sample, both students who preregistered and those who did not preregister were surveyed.

Preregistered students were mailed an anonymous questionnaire, consisting of 35 items in session I and 46 items in session II. An additional 11 items were given to students attending session II in an attempt to get some evaluation/satisfaction ratings of the summer school experience. The questionnaire covered a variety of areas such as general description, preferences, attitudes, and perceptions of the summer school milieu. Non-respondents were followed-up by postcard and telephone reminders.

The session I sample consisted of 85 preregistered students, of which 65 students (76%) participated. In session II, 81 preregistered students were surveyed and 67 students (83%) responded.

At the time of registration for both sessions (I and II), students who had not preregistered were randomly asked to participate in the study. A total of 110 students enrolling for session I were surveyed, from which 81 (74%) responded. In session II, 110 students registering for classes were asked to fill out the questionnaire and 89 (81%) participated. Therefore, the total subject pool numbered 302, an overall return rate of 78%.

## ANALYSES

Three kinds of analyses were used in analyzing the data obtained from the questionnaire. Nominal data were analyzed by frequency, percentage and chi-square. Likert items were analyzed by two sets of two-way analyses of variance (sex by race, and registration by session).

## RESULTS

General Description. Unless otherwise noted, all differences in nominal data results presented below were significant at the .05 level. Of the 302 students who participated in this study, 47% were male and 53% were female. Seventy-four percent of the students who completed the survey were white (47% male, 53% female), 15% were black (48% male, 52% female), 7% Asian (30% male, 70% female), 2% Hispanic (67% male, 33% female), and 3% (67% male, 33% female) identified themselves as "other."

The mean age of the students was 25.8 years. Sixty-six percent of the sample were single, 28% were married, and 5% were divorced or separated. Only 6% of the sample reported that they were living in a UMCP residence hall.

When students were asked about their employment status, the largest group (37%) were employed part-time ( 27% worked during the day, 10% at night), another 23% indicated that they were employed full time (18% during the day, and 5% at night), while 7% of the sample said they were employed during the regular academic year but had the summer off, and an additional 34% said they were not currently employed.

Students reported a mean yearly income of $7,243 (S.D.= $8, 134) and a mean family income of $27,415 (S.D. = $17,084). The variations in both student and family income were great, as shown by the large standard deviations, and hence differences were not significant at .05.

Academically: Who, What, When, Why and Where? Six percent of the students attending summer school were academically classified as freshmen, 13% sophomores, 22% juniors, 26% seniors, 24% graduate students, and an additional 9% indicated special or "other" student status. 51% of the students said that they had attended previous UMCP summer sessions, 78% of the students said they had attended UMCP during the regular academic year, and an additional 18% indicated that they were enrolled in a university or college other than UMCP during their regular academic year.

73% of the sample attended classes during the day (8a.m. to 5p.m.), 10% attended night classes (after 5p.m.), while an additional 17% of the students reported attending both day and night classes. 66% of the students reported that the selection of classes was sufficient. On the average, students indicated they were carrying 4.4 academic credit hours.

Students gave the following reason for coming to UMCP for summer school: 48% because they regularly attended UMCP, 14% because of the large number of classes offered, 8% because of the location, 7% because of the relatively low tuition, 7% because they lived in the area, and 13% for "other" reasons. When asked why they were attending classes this summer, 53% reported that they were trying to accelerate their academic progress and complete classes in the shortest amount of time, 19% of the students were attending classes to make up academic deficiencies, 8% for purposes of enrichment or self-improvement, 7% for professional certification, and 7% of the students were attending summer classes to take courses that they were unable to schedule during the regular academic year. An additional 7% reported "other" as their reason for attending summer school.

Students were asked to indicate a preference for class times and meeting schedules. Fifty-five percent of the students preferred taking morning classes only, 8% preferred taking afternoon classes only, 11% showed a preference for

night classes only, 12% of the sample reported a preference for attending classes evenly distributed throughout the day, while an additional 13% of the students indicated that it "doesn't matter".

When asked about preferred daytime class schedules, 29% indicated a preference for attending classes Monday through Friday. It should be noted that 92% of the students choosing this class schedule classified themselves as daytime students (8a.m. - 5p.m.). Twenty-seven percent of the summer students reported a preference for a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday class schedule, (the majority of this group also reported being daytime students). Fourteen percent of the students preferred a Monday, Wednesday, Friday course schedule, 14% chose Tuesday and Thursday, 10% Monday and Wednesday, 4% preferred a Tuesday through Friday schedule, while an additional 2% reported Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday as their preferred days for attending classes.

When asked to indicate a preference in night class schedules, students chose a different pattern of schedule preferences. Thirty-seven percent of all the students showed a preference for attending classes only on Tuesday and Thursday; however, it is important to note that 41% of the night-time students indicated a preference for this class schedule. While 25% of all the respondents reported a preference for the Monday and Wednesday schedule, this schedule was also supported by 41% of the night-time students. Fourteen percent of the sample showed a preference for a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday schedule, while the remaining 18% of the night students preferred this schedule. Ten percent of the students were more in favor of a Monday through Friday class schedule; likewise, 10% preferred Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 2% Tuesday through Friday, and only 1% Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. It is important to note that these class schedules were not preferred by any of the night students, although differences were not significant at the .05 level.

Students were asked hypothetically to indicate a preference for weekend class scheduling if it were available. Thirty-four percent of the students would prefer classes scheduled Thursday evening and Saturday morning, 29% said Saturday morning only, 9% selected Saturday and Sunday morning, 8% Thursday evening and Saturday afternoon, 7% Thursday evening and Sunday afternoon, 6% Thursday evening and Sunday morning, and 4% Saturday and Sunday afternoon.

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and significant results for attitude items by sex and race. For purposes of analysis, race has been stratified into white and non-white. Significant differences (.05) were found on five items. Findings indicated that students in general, regardless of race or sex, tended to express similar views and preferences towards their summer school experiences. Students expressed agreement with the importance of knowing who is teaching summer classes before selecting them. Students also endorsed the item which asked if the University should offer special master's programs over a period of four summers. Not surprisingly, students agreed that more students would attend summer school if the tuition were lower.

Differences by race and sex showed that women were more likely than men to feel that out-of-state students should be charged in-state fees for summer school (item 4). Non-whites were more interested in a masters program over four summers than were whites (item 5). Significant interactions of race and sex indicated that non-white women were most concerned with knowing who was teaching a course before taking it (item 3). White males were more likely to feel their courses were stimulating and exciting (item 18) and that their goals for summer school were met (item 17) than were non-white males, while among females the opposite was true. Non-white females were more likely to feel their courses were stimulating and exciting and that their summer schools were met than where white females. A more detailed look at the results of items 17 and 18 seems to indicate that white males

and females had nearly the same responses, while the large differences among non-whites caused the significant results, in that non-white females tended to be very positive while nonwhite males were very negative.

In rating their summer school experience, students agreed that their academic work was much more intense in summer school than during the regular academic year. Overall, students reported that their summer courses were stimulating and exciting, and in general agreed that their goals for summer school were met.

## DISCUSSION

Generally, the results showed that many summer students use summer school to accelerate their education, to catch up on the courses they missed, or to repeat courses in which they did not do well. Summer school students were diverse, and although their reasons for attending summer school differed, they did share a common experience in pursuing and obtaining knowledge, degrees and credentials through the vehicle of attending summer school.

In terms of providing services for summer school students, administrators need to continue present services, and at the same time, use research data to look for areas of improvement. This study found that over half of the students attending summer school worked either full or part-time. This illustrates a need for flexibility and variety in summer courses being offered. In other words, the same course should be offered at different time schedules to meet the varying schedules of the student population.

More upper level and graduate level courses should be offered to meet the needs of the majority of the summer school population, which consisted primarily of juniors, seniors, and graduate students.

Students indicated that it was important to know who is teaching a course before selecting it. This would indicate that summer school schedules should

provide this information as soon and as accurately as possible.

Since only 6% of the summer students lived on campus, student services should be mainly directed towards the commuter. It appears necessary to find out whether services such as shuttle buses, carpooling, food services, and parking are sufficient.

Data from this study indicate that summer school students are older than regular term students. Findings also pointed out that 78% of the students attending summer school at UMCP also attended UMCP during the regular academic year. These findings are contrary to those found in other studies (Hawaii University, 1978; Kanun, 1970). This illustrates the importance of knowing the student population and not generalizing based on other research findings.

The finding that nonwhite males feel the most negative about their courses and meeting their summer goals is an important one, and tends to follow a pattern noted in other studies. Sedlacek and Brooks (1976) have concluded that the alienation of nonwhite males tends to be a vehicle employed by whites to control nonwhite minority groups. That this pattern may continue among summer school students is worth specific action and planning from those providing for teaching, student services, and administration during the summer.

Only recently has attention been paid to summer students. This is partly due to the rapid increase in summer school enrollment in the last five years, from 9,000 in 1974 to approximately 16,000 students in 1979 at UMCP. Summer school officials are concerned with providing students with an academic and social milieu congruent with the make up and needs of its summer student body. But planning for these students requires answers to a number of questions, the most salient of which are: Who are they? And for what reasons are they attending? Only when we fully understand the answers to these questions can we design and implement appropriate educational experiences under the guise of academic excellence and professional

relevance. Hopefully, this and other research like it, will help answer these questions and provide some impetus for consideration of a group largely ignored by student personnel programs: summer school students.

REFERENCES

Cuyahoga Community College Analysis of 1972 summer session. Cleveland: Cuyahoga Community College, 1973. (ERIC Document Reporduction Service Number ED 080 1114).

Hawaii University, the 1978 summer session : Community Colleges. Honolulu: Hawaii University, 1978. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service Number ED 156 292).

Kanun, C. Actual and ideal patterns of attendance, summer sessions and academic year, 1964-68, 1963-64 to 1967-68, Pt. 2, Series 1. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1970. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service Number ED 034 476).

Sedlacek, W.E. and Brooks, G.C., Jr. Racism in American Education: A model for change. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, Inc., 1976.

Sesow, F.W. Curing the summer slump. College Board Review, 1974, 92, 16.

Williams, G. New audiences for summer sessions. College Management, 1974, 9, 22-24.

Zillman, D.N. The summer session non-degree credit student: Personal characteristics and academic performance. Journal of Educational Research, 1969, 63, 178-180.

Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations and Significant Results for Attitude Items by Sex and Race*

| Attitude Items | MALES | | | | FEMALES | | | | Differences Significant at .05 (using analyses of variance) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Nonwhite N=37 | | White N=105 | | Nonwhite N=42 | | White N=118 | | |
| | Means | S.D. | Means | S.D. | Means | S.D. | Means | S.D. | |
| I would rather take a short, intensive one-week course than a standard five and one-half week course. | 3.20 | 1.27 | 3.66 | 1.24 | 3.20 | 1.45 | 3.28 | 1.42 | None |
| The University should offer classes on weekends. | 3.20 | 1.35 | 2.82 | 1.17 | 2.76 | 1.32 | 2.86 | 1.24 | None |
| It is important to know who is teaching summer courses before selecting them. | 2.17 | 1.05 | 2.15 | 1.15 | 1.68 | 1.12 | 2.02 | .95 | Sex by Race |
| Students who are not Maryland State residents should receive a waiver of non-resident tuition for the summer sessions. | 2.27 | 1.17 | 3.16 | 1.40 | 2.15 | 1.24 | 2.71 | 1.24 | Sex |
| The University should offer a special master's program over four summers. | 2.43 | .82 | 2.44 | .87 | 2.25 | .87 | 2.17 | .90 | Race |
| More students would attend summer school if the tuition were lower. | 1.93 | 1.00 | 2.32 | 1.04 | 1.83 | 1.06 | 2.29 | 1.01 | None |
| Summer courses usually cover less material than those offered during the regular school year. | 3.28 | 1.13 | 3.00 | .95 | 3.08 | 1.29 | 2.93 | .96 | None |
| Summer school courses are taught better than those during the regular school year. | 3.14 | 1.06 | 3.01 | .84 | 2.87 | 1.00 | 3.08 | .83 | None |

Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations and Significant Results for Attitude Items by Sex and Race*

| Attitude Items | MALES | | | | FEMALES | | | | Differences Significant at .05 (using analysis of variance) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Nonwhite N=27 | | White N=105 | | Nonwhite N=42 | | White N=118 | | |
| | Means | S.D. | Means | S.D. | Means | S.D. | Means | S.D. | |
| I have found that summer school provides enough recreational activities. | 3.57 | 1.13 | 2.95 | 1.19 | 2.60 | .55 | 3.12 | .82 | None |
| I feel that summer school provides me with enough cultural activities. | 3.86 | .90 | 2.95 | .89 | 3.00 | 1.22 | 3.21 | .82 | None |
| I feel that summer school did a good job of advertising their summer services. | 3.86 | .90 | 3.20 | 1.06 | 2.80 | .84 | 3.00 | 1.03 | None |
| The summer school does not provide enough extracurricular/social activities. | 2.43 | .79 | 2.85 | .93 | 3.00 | 1.00 | 2.88 | .60 | None |
| I find the work load much more intense in summer school. | 2.14 | 1.21 | 2.20 | .89 | 1.40 | .55 | 2.48 | 1.23 | None |
| The courses I took were taught in new and innovative ways. | 3.00 | 1.29 | 3.30 | .86 | 3.00 | .71 | 2.88 | 1.02 | None |
| Overall, the summer school surpassed my expectations. | 2.86 | 1.07 | 2.75 | .72 | 3.00 | .71 | 2.94 | .93 | None |
| I found summer school very relaxed and informal. | 3.29 | .95 | 2.80 | 1.01 | 3.00 | 1.58 | 2.81 | .98 | None |

Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations and Significant Results for Attitude Items by Sex and Race*

| Attitude Items | MALES | | | | FEMALES | | | | Differences Significant at .05 (using analysis of variance) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Nonwhite N=27 | | Whites N=105 | | Nonwhite N=42 | | White N=118 | | |
| | Means | S.D. | Means | S.D. | Means | S.D. | Means | S.D. | |
| 17. My goals for summer school were not met. | 3.00 | 1.29 | 3.65 | .67 | 4.80 | .45 | 3.61 | .97 | Sex by Race |
| 18. I found my summer courses stimulating and exciting. | 3.14 | 1.21 | 2.55 | .76 | 1.80 | .84 | 2.45 | .90 | Sex by Race |
| 19. The professor(s) were accessible to me. | 2.57 | 1.27 | 2.60 | 1.14 | 2.20 | 1.64 | 2.30 | 1.02 | None |

* Based on a five point scale, 1 = Strongly agree, 5 - Strongly disagree